

***Bi-Partisan bill focuses on helping small businesses, veterans, Native Americans and women***

The recent passage of bi-partisan legislation that would reauthorize and modernize the Small Business Administration's (SBA) entrepreneurial development programs was hailed by Congresswoman Debbie Halvorson (IL-11) recently. With the vote of Halvorson and others Members of the House from both sides of the aisle, Job Creation through Entrepreneurship Act of 2009 (HR 2352) would not only help small businesses survive the current economic downturn, but also help them grow and put more people to work.

The bill not only benefits current small business owners, but also opens the door wider for Veterans, Native Americans, and women to take part in small business ownership. It creates within the SBA a new Veterans Business Center Program and an Office of Native American Affairs, while authorizing funds to improve and expand the Women's Business Center Program.

"Entrepreneurial development programs such as this helped to create 73,000 jobs in 2008 alone - and we need to do even more if possible in 2009," said Halvorson. "Small businesses are the engines of our economy and as we face this current economic crisis, we must support small business owners and make sure they have the resources they need to grow and create more jobs."

Congresswoman Halvorson offered an amendment to the Job Creation and Entrepreneurship Act that ensures surviving spouses of armed forces members, national guardsmen, and veterans are eligible for training and counseling from the newly created Small Business Administration Veterans Business Center.

"This bill will help promote jobs and the small business owner will have opportunities to access credit, modern training centers, distance learning programs and green entrepreneurship training programs," Halvorson added. "It is definitely a positive piece

of legislation for businesses throughout the 11<sup>th</sup> District and the United States."

The Job Creation through Entrepreneurship Act of 2009 increases the use of modern technology, establishes benchmark requirements, requires program coordination, and ensures effective use of taxpayer dollars. In addition, the bill creates a grant program for SBDCs specifically designed to assist small firms in securing capital such as the new small business lending generated under the Recovery Act.

The Recovery Act contains numerous provisions to generate new small business lending, such as increasing from 85% to 90% the amount of an SBA-backed loan that the government guarantees - with estimates that the Act will generate \$21 billion in new lending and investment for small businesses.

The bill was passed by the House of Representatives and goes to the Senate for debate.

□

*The Following are highlights of the provisions in the Job Creation Through Entrepreneurship Act:*

**Modernizing the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) Program.** Makes several key changes to the operation of the Small Business Development Centers (SBDC) program. To ensure communities are provided the services their entrepreneurs demand, local SBDCs are given a stronger voice in determining their service offerings and human resources. Taxpayers are protected by a provision that concentrates resources on entrepreneurial development, not overhead. Finally, the SBDC program is given flexibility to be more responsive during natural disasters, permitting these centers to function and contribute to recovery.

**Establishment of Veterans Business Center Program.** Authorizes \$10 million in FY 2010 and \$12 million in FY 2011 for the SBA to expand entrepreneurial development assistance to veterans by increasing outreach facilities across the country, establishing specialized assistance programs, and updating the institutional structure designed to customize policies and programs targeted to veterans.

**Broadening the Women's Business Centers Program.** Improves and expands business development resources for women entrepreneurs by increasing counseling and training facilities for this sector, particularly targeting underserved areas.

**Enhancing Native American Entrepreneurship.** Ensures entrepreneurial development services are customized to Native American entrepreneurs' needs and communities by formalizing in statute the SBA's Office of Native American Affairs and establishing grants for business development outreach facilities in regions with high concentrations of these enterprises.

**SCORE Program Improvements.** Increases the effectiveness of the SCORE (Service Corps of Retired Executives) program by establishing new performance and benchmark requirements for the agency's business mentoring resources.

**Helping Small Businesses Access Capital.** Creates a grant program specifically designed to assist small firms in securing capital, such as the \$21 billion in new small business lending generated under the Recovery Act.

**Educating Entrepreneurs Through Today's Technology.** Increases access to entrepreneurial development services through the use of communication technologies to facilitate the creation of high-quality distance learning resources through public-private business development experts.

**Boosting Entrepreneurs' Role in the Green Economy.** Establishes a green entrepreneurial development program, which will provide education, classes and one-on-one instruction in starting a business in the fields of energy efficiency, green technology, or clean technology.

**Opening New Opportunities for Small Businesses in the Federal Marketplace.** Creates a

procurement training program to help local agencies identify contracts that are suitable for local small firms and provides technical assistance regarding the federal procurement process, including helping small firms comply with federal regulations and bonding requirements.

**Expanding Entrepreneurship.** Updates the structure of the SBA's entrepreneurial development portfolio by requiring increased coordination and planning by program operators.